

# Brain-injured ABC journalist Woodruff to speak Monday

## United Way bringing Bob Woodruff to Austin for fundraiser.

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Bob Woodruff, the ABC newscaster who sustained a brain injury in January 2006 from a roadside bomb in Iraq, will speak in Austin on Monday during the United Way Capital Area's annual dinner.

Woodruff and his wife, Lee, will recount the months of recovery that followed his life-



Kelly Campbell

[\(enlarge photo\)](#)

Bob and Lee Woodruff have become advocates for veterans who have suffered brain injuries.

threatening injury and discuss how his situation mirrors those of troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan with brain injuries, post-traumatic stress disorder and other wounds that will last years, if not a lifetime.

"It'll be a talk of hope," Lee Woodruff said in a telephone interview Wednesday. "I think the overriding message is people can survive anything."

Bob Woodruff, 46, spent several weeks in an induced coma after the injury, and at one point in the recovery could not even understand what a mortgage is, despite holding a law degree. But "I had nothing but the best" care and support, Woodruff said, "and I had a company to keep me hired."

He has now returned to reporting full time. He and his wife have started the Bob Woodruff Foundation for Traumatic Brain Injury.

In February, the Woodruffs released a documentary titled "In An Instant: A Family's Journey of Love and Healing." The day after the documentary was released, the Department of Defense mandated that all soldiers and Marines returning from war be screened for brain injuries.

That is not nearly enough, the Woodruffs say. Today's wars create different strains, with many troops who once died of their wounds now surviving and sometimes needing years of care.

The country needs to rethink how it approaches that care, Lee Woodruff said, modifying practices such as sending a wounded service member to far-off military hospitals for months or years at a time.

She said an extended stay at one of the four Department of Veterans Affairs centers that specialize in brain injuries is often "not realistic when a soldier's got a family" at home.

Instead, the Woodruffs say, the federal government needs to beef up the military's health insurance and create a network that can connect troops with care close to their homes.

The suggestion is echoed by doctors and veterans advocates in Texas, where experts suspect that hundreds or perhaps thousands of troops who have left active duty are living with an undiagnosed brain injury.

They might live hours from available care. They might not even realize they have a brain injury or post-traumatic stress disorder, doctors say. They might not want to admit they need help.

Even when a service member is connected with proper care, the Woodruffs say, communities must still be ready to help long after the hospital stays are over. Little things could be important, such as bringing by meals or taking a wounded veteran to hit golf balls so a spouse can have time alone, Lee Woodruff said.

"I think that kind of help typifies what it means to be Americans," she said.

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